

# THE ASIAN AGE

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## Crown town of temples

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**Burdwan:** Ambika Kalna popularly known as Kalna, strikes one with its architectural marvels steeped in history.

A varied history has gifted the place with architectural landmarks that leave the eyes awestruck with their artistic resplendence.

Ambika Kalna's terracotta grandeur stands as tall as Bishnupur's world famous temples. The royal estate of Bishnupur was purchased in 1806 by the royal family of Burdwan which had its base at Kalna. The magic of terracotta at both the places owes its presence to

their lineage.

The first reference to Ambika Kalna is found in a 6th Century text — *Kubjika Tantra*. Historian Cunningham said that the place was once a part of the famous Tamralipta port of Bengal during the Gupta era. In 1702, Aurangzeb appointed Raja Jagatram as the administrator of Kalna. The place started developing during the rule of his son Kirtichandra from 1729.

Zamindars of Burdwan were religious and patronised fine arts. Although their roots were in Punjab, yet they became a part of Bengal's glorious heritage.

The golden period of Kalna's temple architecture began in 1760

after King of Burdwan Tilokchand refused to help Lord Clive against Siraj-ud-Daulah in 1757. Tilokchand was vanquished by Captain Watts in 1760 and turned to spiritualism.

Thus started the 'temple renaissance' of Kalna. From 1752 to 1766, seven big and 12 small temples which are exotic pieces of art were built here.

The first thing that attracts you in Kalna is a set of 108 Shiva temples inside a single complex. Rare in India, this amazing set of temples were built in typical Aaatachala style by Maharaja Tejachandra in 1809 to celebrate the ownership of Bishnupur's royal estate.